

July 2011

U.S. Small Business Administration

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It's Your Business

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*Eco-Entrepreneurs Dive Into
Small Business Success* 1, 2

*New Online SBA Tool for
Exporting* 2

*Syracuse SCORE Startup
Workshop* 3

*Public Relations for Small
Business Workshop in
Albany* 3

*International Market
Analysis Workshop in Canton* 3

*Export Financing Event in
Syracuse* 3

*Save The Date: 2011 Albany
Matchmaker & Expo* 4

*Disaster Victims Urged To Be
Aware of Recovery Scams* 4

ECO-ENTREPRENEURS DIVE INTO SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

Milfoil and Asian clams are two invasive aquatic species that are creating havoc in lakes across the country as they overwhelm native species, damage ecosystems and reduce fishing, boating and other lake tourism activities. Left untreated, invasive aquatic species can turn beautiful lakes into stagnant bogs, with low oxygen levels, turbid water and fish kills.

While pursuing their degrees in Natural Resource Management at Paul Smith's College, Andrew Lewis and Tommy Thomson were lead divers for the college on an experimental invasive plant management project on Upper Saranac Lake and were able to see the problem firsthand. They also saw an opportunity that would allow them to combine their diving skills and degrees in Natural Resource Management into a profitable business.

After college, they started Aquatic Invasive

Management, LLC in 2007 to provide a new and environmentally-friendly way to control nuisance and invasive aquatic plants. Based in AuSable Forks, AIM won its first contract in the fall of 2007 to reduce milfoil presence in Minerva Lake. With little business experience, the business partners relied on their research skills, adaptability and energy to learn as the company grew.

When they needed to buy equipment, Lewis and Thomson turned to Nikki Wright at the Adirondack Economic Development Corporation, an

SBA Microlender. The \$35,000 SBA Microloan financed the purchase of a new boat, trailer and gear needed for the increase in business the following year.

"We were able to grow from one contract in 2007 to three in 2008. We had six contracts in 2009 and 10 the year after. We've seen exponential growth and we've learned that 10-12 lakes a season are our capacity at the current stage of our business," explained co-owner Tommy Thomson.

Inclement weather

Cont. on p. 2

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An Aquatic Invasive Management, LLC diver collecting milfoil.



ECO-ENTREPRENEURS DIVE INTO SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

Cont. from p. 1

determines the day-to-day schedule for AIM diving crews as well as the company's operating season, which usually lasts six months of the year for diver comfort and safety. Thomson credits the company's success to the natural methods used to manage invasive species. Divers harvest acres of milfoil in a day by hand; the process is chemical-free, uses 30 lb. mesh bags that can be cleaned and reused, and yields a compostable product. Today, AIM has passed the \$1 million sales mark, with 13

full-time employees and contracts with lakes across the Adirondack Park, from south of Lake George to the Canadian border. With the potential to expand operations beyond New York State, Lewis and Thomson have a successful small business with a bright future.

Thomson has found the schedule of running a business- often 14 or 16 hours a day- completely rewarding: "With your business, it's a love. The more you put into your own business, the more you get out of it and the happier you'll feel at the end of the day."

Aquatic Invasive Management, LLC owners Tommy Thomson (left) and Andrew Lewis (right) loading bags of milfoil on location.



A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

96% of the world's consumers reside outside the U.S. Where will your next customer come from?



Small businesses interested in starting or expanding sales of their goods and services overseas have access to a new, free online tool that will gauge their readiness to export and help them develop an export business plan.

The Export Business Planner, developed by the U.S. Small Business Administration, offers a ready-made, customizable and easily accessible document that can be updated and referenced continuously as the business

grows.

The Planner, located at www.sba.gov/exportbusinessplanner, allows users to:

- Determine their export readiness
- Learn about training and counseling opportunities
- Complete worksheets for global market research
- Obtain financing information and options
- Customize export marketing plans, and

- Access resources for exporters

The Planner is a PDF file that can be easily downloaded, accessed, customized, and updated every time you use it. It features an extensive compilation of export research and information, including quick links to websites, video profiles, training podcasts, trade statistics, contact information to counseling resources such as SCORE and SBDCs, a list of current SBA lenders and much more.

SMALL BUSINESS EVENTS CALENDAR

Public Relations for Small Business Workshop in Albany

JULY
19

Kate Baker,
Business
Advisor
with the

Albany Small Business Development Center, will present "How to Harness the Media to Promote Your Business" on Tuesday, July 19. This will be an interactive workshop designed to assist business owners with utilizing public relations strategies to promote their business.

During the one hour workshop, the topics covered will include: how to develop a media list, components of a successful press release, pitching a slice of life story, how to become a media expert, and how to develop a public relations strategy.

The workshop will be held from 8:30—9:30 a.m. at the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce. For more information contact Kate Baker at (518) 485-7658 or kbaker@uamail.albany.edu or register [online](#).

Syracuse SCORE Startup Workshop

JULY
13

Syracuse SCORE will present a full-day workshop for individuals interested in starting their own business on July 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at CenterState CEO in Syracuse. The cost to attend is \$40 pre-paid or \$45 at the door and includes lunch and materials.

Attendees will learn about business planning, marketing, legal considerations in business planning, the bank loan officer's point of view, print and online advertising, financial controls and accounting, business insurance and much more. For more information and to register, please contact Syracuse SCORE at 315-471-9393 ext. 245.

International Market Analysis Workshop in Canton

JULY
19

Small businesses interested in learning how to begin exporting are welcome to attend the free upcoming workshop presented by the Canton Small Business Development Center on Tuesday, July 19 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Certified Small Business Advisor Michelle Collins will cover the resources and methods essential to analyzing the potential for your small business services and products in today's global markets. "Market Analysis for International Businesses" will be held at the Newell building on the SUNY Canton campus. To register or for additional information, please contact the Canton SBDC at 315-386-7312.

Export Financing Event in Syracuse

JULY
20

Companies of all sizes who wish to learn more about increasing their export sales and expanding their international business are invited to attend "Export Financing: Increase Your Export Sales With Help from the U.S. Government" event at CenterState CEO in Syracuse.

Attendees will learn how to obtain working capital loans to fulfill foreign sales orders, offer competitive terms to overseas buyers, minimize risks in emerging markets, protect against buyer default and to enter new international markets with assistance from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Export-Import Bank of the United States. Speakers include John Tracy, international trade specialist, US Dept. of Commerce, Toni Corsini, regional manager, US Small Business Administration, Bruce Drossman, export finance manager, Export Import Bank, and David Ayoub, partner-in-charge, Tax Department, Bowers & Co. CPAs.

The seminar will be held from 8:30-10:30 a.m. and the cost to attend is \$30. For more information and to register online, please visit the event [website](#).

SAVE THE DATE- 2011 ALBANY MATCHMAKER & EXPO



Find procurement opportunities at the upcoming 4th annual Albany Matchmaker & Expo!

The 2011 Albany Matchmaker & Expo will be held on Tuesday, September 13th at the Albany Marriott Hotel. Event sponsors include the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce, Albany SBDC, the Business Review, Empire State Development, NYBDC, NYS Contract Reporter, SBA and State Farm Insurance.

The matchmaker offers small businesses the opportunity to meet with

purchasing representatives from large corporations and state and federal agencies in individual 10-minute appointments. Small businesses will be able to register online for this annual sellout event in August. The cost to attend is \$45 per person, with two people per small business maximum.

New for 2011, small businesses will be able to schedule their appointments online during regis-

tration, instead of at the event, and will be able to select from two sessions, either morning or afternoon.

For the latest information on the event, including participating buyers and online registration, please visit the event website at www.sba.gov/albanymatchmaker. Please email James Quackenbush to be added to our email list for the event at james.quackenbush@sba.gov.

DISASTER SURVIVORS URGED TO BEWARE OF RECOVERY SCAMS

The U.S. Small Business Administration is urging disaster victims seeking federal aid to be alert to scam artists posing as federal officials and to be cautious about any solicitations for fees to perform services that are available from federal agency staff for free.

In the wake of widespread flooding, wildfires and tornados in many areas across the country over the past few months, the SBA is particularly concerned about flyers that have appeared in tornado-

damaged areas asking for non-refundable fees of up to \$450 to help disaster victims fill out their loan applications and as much as \$1,000 to verify losses and file loan applications.

Federal agencies involved in disaster recovery will never ask for a fee or payment to file an application for financial assistance or to inspect damaged property.

"Historically, natural disasters bring out the very best in people, and there are countless stories of the selfless acts of help-

ful neighbors and volunteers," said SBA Administrator Karen Mills.

"Unfortunately, we have also seen in the past individuals who attempt to take advantage of people who need assistance. Disaster survivors should be vigilant in protecting their personal assets, particularly in the stressful environment of a disaster recovery."

If you suspect a person is posing as a local or federal agent, or encounter what you believe are fraudulent activities con-

nected with disaster relief operations, contact your local law enforcement officials, phone the toll-free National Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721, or send an email to disaster@leo.gov. The phone line is staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To register for federal help after a disaster declaration, please visit www.DisasterAssistance.gov, or call FEMA at 800-621-3362 (800-426-7585 for the speech or hearing impaired).